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- Parekh, Kalpesh P.
Morristown, New Jersey 07960 (US)
- Kung, Chih Chiang
Somerset, New Jersey 07059 (US)
- Yousry, Mona A.
Oldwick, New Jersey 08858 (US)

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(71) Applicant: AT&T Corp.
New York, NY 10013-2412 (US)

(72) Inventors:

- Barber, James S.
Oldwick, New Jersey 08858 (US)

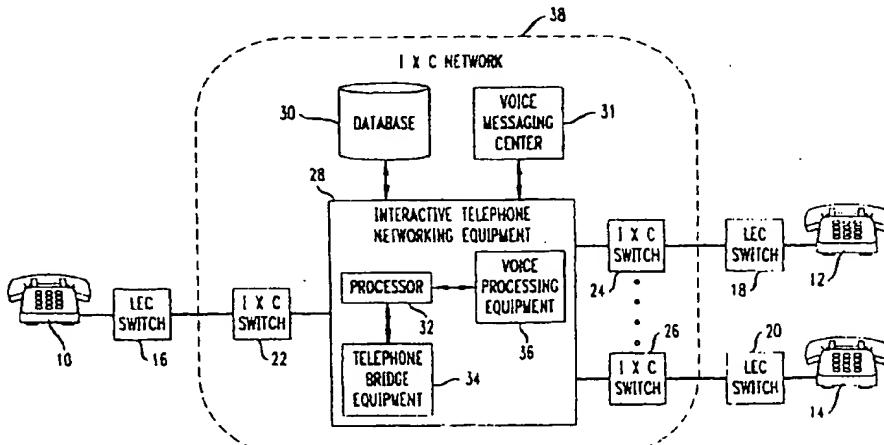
(74) Representative: Harding, Richard Patrick et al
Marks & Clerk,
4220 Nash Court,
Oxford Business Park South
Oxford OX4 2RU (GB)

(54) Interactive telephone networking service

(57) Methods and apparatus are disclosed for enabling parties with similar interests to speak with one another through connections automatically established by equipment within the telephone network. A party seeking to join a conversation or obtain information (referred to as a "requesting subscriber") is connected automatically with an appropriate individual, conference call, or voice messages on the basis of information provided by the requesting subscriber and information about other

prospective parties to the call (other "subscribers" to the interactive telephone network service). The requesting subscriber need not know the identities or telephone numbers of the other subscribers. The identities and telephone numbers of the other subscribers are maintained in a database and may be held in secrecy. Similarly, a requesting subscriber may create or retrieve telephone messages stored in a database according to the subject matter of the message.

FIG. 1



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

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DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6)										
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim											
X	WO 92 17021 A (TAKAHASHI WATARU) * figures 5-7 * * page 7, line 18 - page 12, line 6 * -----	1-8	H04M3/56 H0403/62 H04M3/50 H04M3/42										
X	US 5 283 731 A (LALONDE JAMES E ET AL) * figures 1-3,5-8 * * column 3, line 42 - column 6, line 42 * * column 7, line 33 - column 10, line 64 * -----	9-11											
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6)										
			H04M										
<p>The present search report has been drawn up for all claims</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">Place of search</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Date of completion of the search</td> <td style="width: 34%;">Examiner</td> </tr> <tr> <td>THE HAGUE</td> <td>29 April 1998</td> <td>Weiss, P</td> </tr> </table>				Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner	THE HAGUE	29 April 1998	Weiss, P				
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<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">X : particularly relevant if taken alone</td> <td style="width: 33%;">T : theory or principle underlying the invention</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category</td> <td>E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A : technological background</td> <td>D : document cited in the application</td> </tr> <tr> <td>O : non-written disclosure</td> <td>L : document cited for other reasons</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P : intermediate document</td> <td>S : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</td> </tr> </table>				X : particularly relevant if taken alone	T : theory or principle underlying the invention	Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category	E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date	A : technological background	D : document cited in the application	O : non-written disclosure	L : document cited for other reasons	P : intermediate document	S : member of the same patent family, corresponding document
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